

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 13991

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, NI
SUBJECT: FEDECO POSTPONES VOTER REGISTRATION CAMPAIGN

REF: LAGOS 10231

SUMMARY: FEDECO HAS ANNOUNCED THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE
NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION CAMPAIGN FROM DECEMBER 3 TO
JANUARY 14. PROBABLE CAUSE OF THE POSTPONEMENT IS
GRADUAL RECOGNITION OF MASSIVE LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS.
END SUMMARY.

1. THE FEDERAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION (FEDECO) ANNOUNCED
TODAY THAT THE NATIONAL REGISTRATION OF VOTERS WHICH
WAS TO BEGIN ON DECEMBER 3 HAS BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL
JANUARY 14. THE DECISION WAS TAKEN IN 'EMERGENCY' ONE-
DAY MEETING OF THE COMMISSION HELD IN KANO AND PRESIDED
OVER BY ITS CHAIRMAN, CHIEF MICHAEL ANI. ACCORDING
TO THE REVISED SCHEDULE, THE REGISTRATION
CAMPAIGN WILL RUN FROM JANUARY 14 TO FEBRUARY 28.

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2. IN A COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AFTER THE KANO MEETING,
FEDECO STATED THAT THE POSTPONEMENT WAS NECESSARY IN VIEW
OF THE IMPORTANCE THE COMMISSION ATTACHED TO THE PUSTRIC
ENLIGHTMENT CAMPAIGN WHICH WAS TO PRECEDE THE REGISTRATION
EXERCISE. THE COMMUNIQUE ADDED\$ 'THE VENSENSUS TO SHIFT
THE DATE WAS BECAUSE A NUMBER OF STATES HAVE STILL TO
LAUNCH THEIR PUBLICITY CAMPAIGNS. THE PROGRAM DESERVES

TO BE GIVEN FAIRLY ADEQUATE TIME SO AS TO GET DOWN WELL WITH THE PUBLIC, PARTICULARLY THOSE IN RURAL AREAS, IN ORDER TO PRODUCE THE DESIRED RESULT.'

3. COMMENT: THE DECISION TO POSTPONE THE REGISTRATION EXERCISE WAS PROBABLY INEVITABLE. FEDECO HAS ONLY GRADUALLY BECOME AWARE OF THE MONUMENTAL LOGISTICAL TASK ENTAILED IN A NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION CAMPAIGN IN NIGERIA. WE SUSPECT THE PROBLEM BECAME MORE PAINFULLY EVIDENT AS FEDECO ORGANIZATION EXPANDED OUT OF LAGOS INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE.

4. WHEN EMBASSY OFFICER MET MVAST WEEK WITH STATE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OFFICIALS IN YOLA AND JOS, OFFICIALS WERE GRAPPLING WITH PROBLEMS THAT CLEARLY COULD NOT BE SOLVED BY DECEMBER 3. ALHAJI MUSTAFA E. IBRAHIM, ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER FOR PLATEAU STATE, SAID THAT THE THREE TIER ELECTORAL REGISTRATION STRUCTURE - FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL - WAS STILL INCOMPLETE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL. THE LOCAL COMMISSIONS WERE CHARGED WITH CARRYING OUT THE ACTUAL REGISTRATION PROCESS. YET, MANY LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS IN HIS STATE AND THROUGHOUT THE NORTH WERE STILL IN PROCESS OF SETTING UP ELECTORAL COMMITTEES. EACH LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION WAS TO REGISTER PEOPLE WHERE THEY RESIDED AND TO DRAW UP BUILDING BLOCK

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UNITS OF 500 VOTERS IN ORDER TO ALLOW THE STATE TO PUBLISH A PRELIMINARY REGISTER OF VOTERS IN APRIL OR MAY. IBRAHIM PREDICTED SLIPPAGE OF THE DECEMBER 3 DATE.

5. SIMILARLY, IN YOLA, THE STATE ELECTORAL COMMISSION WAS STRUGGLING WITH THE PROBLEM OF CARRYING OUT THE EXERCISE IN THE RUGGED, RURAL CONTEXT OF GUGOLA STATE. AGAIN, LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONS WERE INCOMPLETE AND LOGISTICAL RESOURCES WERE LACKING. EMBASSY OFFICER SAW A HANDFUL OF OFFICIAL CARS IN YOLA ON WHICH STATE ELECTORAL COMMISSION IDENTIFICATION WAS HASTILY BEING PAINTED.

6. WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED TO SEE ADDITIONAL SLIPPAGE IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VOTER REGISTRATION CAMPAIGN. END COMMENT. EASUM

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